

State Department review  
completed

19 April 1972

CHRONOLOGY OF THE 1971 INDIA-PAKISTAN WAR

By 21 November, Indian Prime Minister Gandhi was pursuing a policy of gradually increasing support for the Bengalis. Indian troops had already entered East Pakistan in battalion strength. Her policy was designed to force Pakistani President Yahya to negotiate with the Bengalis on their terms by making his only alternative a military defeat in East Pakistan ostensibly by the rebels, but actually with enough Indian help so that the rebels' success was guaranteed. Mrs. Gandhi was well aware that pursuing this policy could lead to an all-out war with Pakistan, but she was willing to accept this risk.

November

21 The Indians escalated operations in East Pakistan with an attack in the Jessore area, which they later characterized as between brigade and division level.

22 Three Pakistani F-86s were shot down--apparently over India--during the Jessore operation.

23 President Yahya accused India of aggression and declared a state of emergency. Fighting continued in East Pakistan.

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The Indians began attacking in the Hilli area of East Pakistan.

India announced that Indian troops and armor had participated in "defensive" actions inside East Pakistan.

The Pakistanis said they would welcome any big power initiative to end Indian aggression. Islamabad ordered a general military mobilization.

Deputy Foreign Minister Kuznetsov told Ambassador Beam that Moscow was making new efforts to prevent a war in the subcontinent.

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Yahya said in a speech that he hoped to avoid a "conflagration" but added that the situation was moving toward "a point of no return."

26 The Indians acknowledged a new "self-defense" thrust into East Pakistan.

Indian President Giri and Defense Minister Ram said that Pakistan could restore normal relations with India only by releasing Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and negotiating with him.

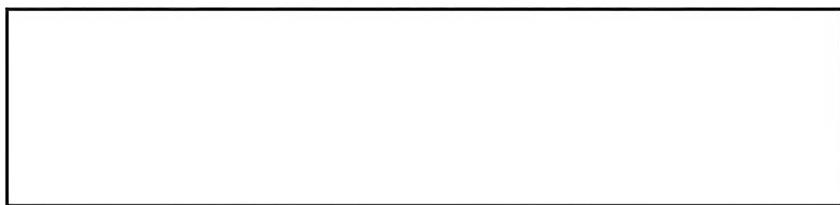
Swaran Singh told Ambassador Keating that he was optimistic that there would not be a full-scale war.

Moscow asked Pakistan to desist from escalating the conflict and come to terms with the Bengalis.

Yahya banned the potentially separatist National Awami Party.

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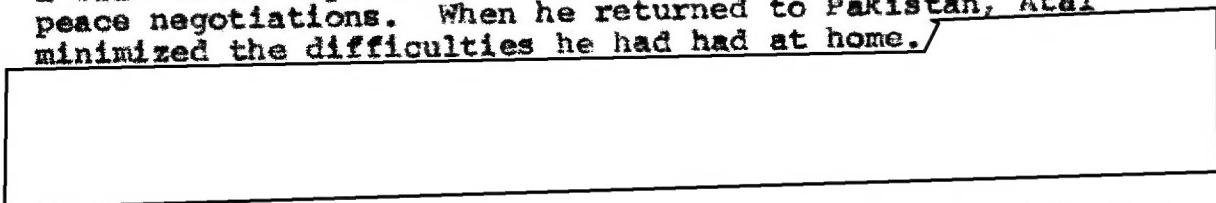
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27 Mrs. Gandhi began a series of tours to border areas.

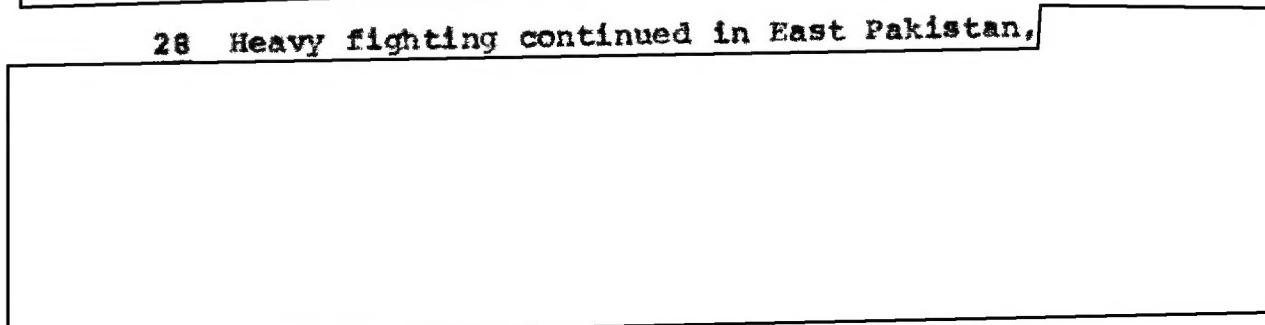
The Indian cabinet turned down the negotiation proposals of J. K. Atal, the new Indian high commissioner to Islamabad. In Islamabad, Atal had been encouraged by a talk with Yahya and had hopes of arranging Indo-Pakistani peace negotiations. When he returned to Pakistan, Atal minimized the difficulties he had had at home.

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28 Heavy fighting continued in East Pakistan,

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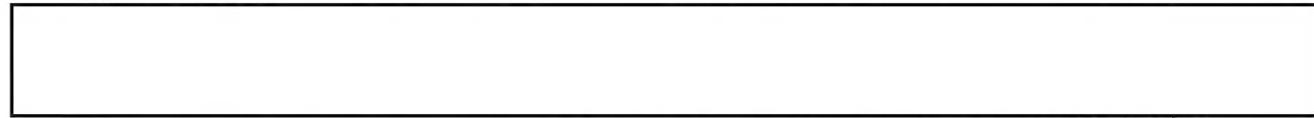


29 The pace of fighting in East Pakistan picked up, and the Indians admitted another "defensive" ground strike. There also was considerable guerrilla activity.

Mrs. Gandhi returned to New Delhi and again expressed her opposition to submitting the Indo-Pakistani problem to the UN.

Chinese Vice Premier Li Hsien-nien accused India of subversive activities and of invading and occupying Pakistani territory. It was the strongest Chinese statement thus far.

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Mrs. Gandhi, in an address to Parliament, demanded the withdrawal of West Pakistani forces from East Pakistan. She indicated that India would continue to send troops across the border.

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December

2 The Indians announced that they would retaliate for an alleged--and apparently imaginary--Pakistani attack on Agartala airfield.

Mrs. Gandhi announced that India would not take orders from foreigners, was not afraid of a cut-off in aid, and again demanded Pakistani withdrawal from East Pakistan.

3 The Pakistanis attacked air bases in western India, claiming that the Indians were attacking all along the western front.

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In the east, the Indians launched a major attack at Akhura near Agartala and stepped up operations in other areas. These actions were prior to the Pakistani air raids in the west.

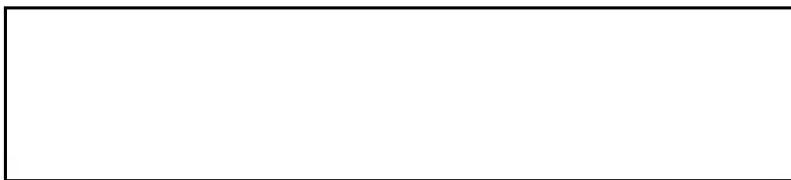
4 The Indian defense secretary said a "no holds barred" offensive had been launched in the east.

In the west, the Indians began advancing in the Sind, while the Pakistanis took Chhamb and Khem Karan in the west. In subsequent days, the Pakistanis launched almost daily attacks in the Chhamb area but were never able to break through the Indian defenses.

The Indians made air attacks on Karachi and other cities.

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The Chinese acting foreign minister condemned India and reaffirmed support for Pakistan.

Kosygin, in Denmark, said that the USSR would not take unilateral action to end the fighting. At the UN, the USSR vetoed the US-sponsored Security Council resolution calling for a cease-fire.

5 Indian OSA-class missile boats sank a Pakistani destroyer off Karachi.

US citizens were evacuated from Karachi.

6 India recognizes Bangladesh and Pakistan breaks relations with India.

The Indians continue to advance in the east and in the Sind.

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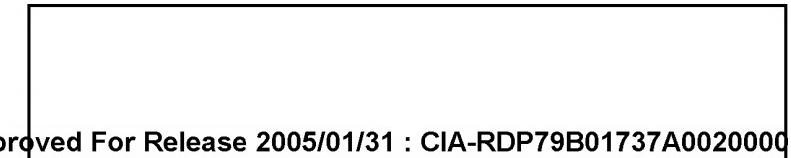
The Indians began a counter-attack in the Sialkot area. This attack later became serious enough to divert Pakistani forces from the Chhamb area.

The UN Security Council sent the India-Pakistan problem to the General Assembly.

7 Yahya announced that Nurul Amin and Z. A. Bhutto would head a future civilian government.

In a speech in Poland, Brezhnev warned against outside intervention in South Asia.

8 The UN General Assembly adopted the US-sponsored cease-fire resolution.



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[Redacted]

In East Pakistan, the Indians reached the Meghna River east of Dacca, took Jessore, and advanced towards Pabna and Khulna.

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Indian air raids did extensive damage to POL facilities in Karachi.

9 Indian missile boats attacked foreign shipping in Karachi harbor.

The Indians crossed the Meghna River near Dacca and opened up a multi-pronged attack from Jessore.

10 Farman Ali, the military adviser to the governor of East Pakistan, proposed a cease-fire that amounted to a surrender, claiming Yahya approved the action. Later in the day this offer was withdrawn, and Islamabad proposed a cease-fire that would have left the status of East Pakistan in doubt.

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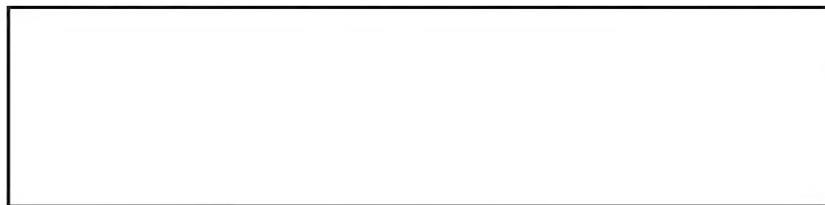
Z. A. Bhutto arrived in New York for the UN debate.

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11 The Indians advanced to a point 36 miles north of Dacca.

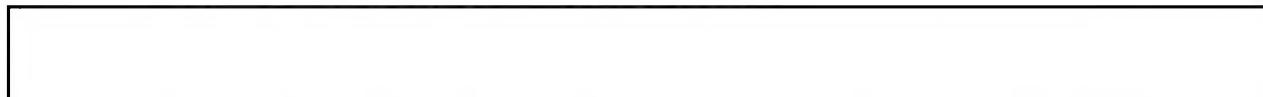
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Swaran Singh arrived in New York.

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12 After more than a week of false starts, foreigners were evacuated from Dacca.

Kuznetsov arrived in New Delhi and Mrs. Gandhi's confidant, D. P. Dhar, arrived in Moscow.

13 The Indians prepared for the final assault on Dacca and advanced to within 20 miles of Chittagong.

14 Governor Malik and Farman Ali tried to arrange a surrender in the east but were opposed by army commander Niazi. Later, Niazi asked the US consul in Dacca to transmit his own cease-fire terms (in effect a surrender) to the Indians. He claimed full authority from Yahya.

15 The Indians demanded that any cease-fire be accompanied by the surrender of Pakistani troops in the east and gave the Pakistanis 16 hours to decide.

16 The Pakistanis in the east surrendered, but Yahya vowed to fight on in the west.

17 Yahya agreed to a cease-fire in the west.

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